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AUTHOR DeMedio, Dwayne L.; Kish, John P., Jr.
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ABSTRACT

Attitudes toward middle school certification in Ohio were studied. The study concerned teachers and principals of schools containing grades 6 through 8. Results, obtained through an attitudinal questionnaire, indicated that type of district and position had no effect on the participants' attitudes. However, educational level (elementary, middle, secondary) did have an effect. Middle school teachers and principals favored certification, but those in elementary and secondary schools did not. Data also showed a genuine need for special middle school certification for counselors. (GK)

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ABSTRACT

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A Study of Attitudes of Teachers and Principals
Toward Middle School Certification

Advocates of middle schools have long insisted that if middle schools are to be successful, they need teachers and principals who are specifically trained to work in these schools. In order to ensure this special preparation, these advocates insist that there must be middle school state certification so that colleges of education will be stimulated to provide special middle school training. Furthermore, since 1960 there has been a significant increase in the number of states offering middle school certification. In spite of this fact there has been to date a paucity of research concerning middle school certification.

This study was therefore conducted to examine attitudes toward middle school certification in Ohio. Specifically, it examined the attitudes toward middle school certification of teachers and principals in selected schools (elementary, middle and secondary) containing grades six through eight. To facilitate the study, an attitudinal questionnaire was sent to 834 randomly selected elementary, middle and secondary schools. The questionnaire used in the study was developed by teachers and college personnel in Northwest Ohio. It was field-tested and found to have a reliability coefficient of .91. To compare the attitudes of the participants responding to the questionnaire (1189 persons), three comparisons were made. These included type of district, position, and educational level. A three-way analysis of variance was used to determine differences in attitudes among the participants in the study.

The results of the study indicated that regarding middle school certification, type of district and position had no effect on the attitudes of the participants. On the other hand, the educational level (elementary, middle

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and secondary) did. That is, middle school teachers and principals favored such certification, while those in elementary and secondary schools did not. Data also showed that all groups (educational levels) favored certification for counselors, while only those in middle schools favored middle school certification for principals. Middle school certification of teachers was favored by both those in middle and secondary schools. All groups (educational levels) favored certification by adding a middle school validation sticker to an elementary or secondary certificate.

In conclusion, the results of the study show strong support of middle school certification by teachers and principals working in middle schools which is the contention of most middle school educators and that there is a genuine need for special middle school certification of teachers, principals and counselors. Furthermore, the results of the study clearly point out that whether or not one favors middle school certification appears to be related to the educational level in which one works.

A Study of Attitudes of Teachers and Principals
Toward Middle School Certification

By

Dwayne L. DeMedio, Ed.D.
Associate Professor
Secondary Education
The University of Toledo

and

John P. Kish, Jr., Ph.D.
Instructor
Center for Educational Research
and Services
The University of Toledo

Advocates of middle schools insist that a major problem facing middle schools nationwide is the lack of properly trained teachers and administrators for these schools. Tyrrel et al. (1974), point out that teachers and administrators are singularly unprepared for the task of understanding and educating middle school students. Andul, Vosbery and Vosbery (1975) insist that middle schools will be unique institutions only when they are staffed by faculty who have middle school training. Moss (1972) and Overly et al. (1969), likewise, note that teachers and administrators preparing to work in middle schools need special training different from that which is provided for those in elementary and secondary education.

The problem of inadequate preparation for middle school teachers and principals is, in reality, related to the lack of middle school certification. Since only a small number of states now offer such certificates, many teacher-preparation institutions across the country are unwilling to provide courses which would lead to middle school certification. Furthermore, students are not encouraged to prepare for teaching careers in middle schools in states in which there is no middle school certification.

It seems clear, therefore, that if teachers and principals preparing to work in middle schools are to receive proper training, there must be middle school certification. At present, there are fourteen states offering middle school certification and thirteen others who have proposed such certification. Other states, including Ohio, are exploring the need for this type of certification. In spite of the increase in the number of states providing middle school certification, there has been to date a paucity of research exploring the question of such certification.

Although there is little doubt among leaders of the middle school movement that there is an urgent need for middle school certification in all

states, this view is not shared by all educators. Consequently, questions concerning the need for middle school certification still remain. Of these questions one seems paramount. What are the attitudes of teachers and principals working in middle schools and other schools containing grades six through eight toward middle school certification?

To explore this question, a study was conducted in Ohio to determine the attitudes of teachers and principals toward middle school certification. Specifically, the study explored two major questions. First, what are the attitudes of sixth through eighth grade teachers and principals toward middle school certification? Second, are there differences in attitudes toward middle school certification among teachers and principals in middle, elementary and secondary schools containing grades six, seven and eight?

METHOD

Procedures

The participants in the study were teachers and principals in Ohio. They were selected from all schools (elementary, middle and secondary), containing grades six, seven, and eight and were surveyed by a questionnaire designed to measure their attitudes toward middle school certification. The Ohio Educational Directory was used to identify the schools for the study. From the 2,774 listed, 834 schools were selected using a table of random numbers. In this sample, 61 percent of the schools were city schools, 4 percent were exempted village and 35 percent were local schools in county systems. These percentages were consistent with the percentages existing in the population (See Table 1).

Table 1

The Number of Schools by Type of District in
the Population and the Sample

Types of Districts	Population		Sample		Participating	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
City	1654	60	509	61	320	59
Exempted Village	105	4	30	4	21	4
Local Schools in County Systems	1015	36	295	35	198	37
Total	2774		834		539	

To measure the results of the questionnaire, a three-way analysis of variance was used to determine if type of position, type of school district, and type of school were related to the attitudes of the participants. To determine differences in attitudes of the participants, three comparisons were used. First, the type of school district in which the participants worked was examined. Second, the position which the participant held (teacher or principal) was considered. Third, the type of school in which the participants worked was analyzed.

Instrumentation

To determine the attitudes of the teachers and principals in the study, a questionnaire, developed by a team of teachers, principals, and college professors from Northwestern Ohio was used. The instrument was field tested in Northwest Ohio and found to be highly reliable.

The questionnaire was composed of items derived from middle school certification programs throughout the country and was constructed using a Likert scale. In this scale, five responses were provided -- strongly

agree, agree, no opinion, disagree, strongly disagree. Points were assigned for each of these five responses -- strongly agree (5 points), agree (4 points), no opinion (3 points), disagree (2 points), and strongly disagree (1 point). The questionnaire was divided into three parts. Part I contained five items, three dealing with middle school certification of principals, teachers, and counselors and two pertaining to procedures for granting certification. Part II provided seventeen items which assessed attitudes toward the courses and experiences which should be offered in preparing teachers, principals, and counselors for working in middle schools. Part III presented ten items which measured attitudes toward the grade levels, curriculum and program which should be provided in middle schools. A reliability coefficient (coefficient alpha) was calculated for the total instrument as well as each of the three parts. The coefficient alpha ranged from .69 to .92 for the three parts and .91 for the entire instrument.

To aid in the analysis of the questionnaire, a "no opinion" score was determined for each part of the questionnaire by multiplying 3 (the weight of a no opinion response) times the number of items in that part. Scores above the "no opinion" score were looked upon as indicators of positive attitudes, while scores below the "no opinion" score were viewed as indicators of negative attitudes. The "no opinion" score for Part I was 15, for Part II 51, and for Part III 30. In this study, only the results of Part I of the questionnaire are reported.

RESULTS

The results indicated that of the 834 schools in the sample, 539 schools responded to the survey. This was a 65 percent school response rate with a total of 1,189 persons responding -- 433 principals and 756 teachers. Table 2

indicates the distribution of participants by positions within the three types of districts and the types of schools in which they worked.

The results in Table 3, which report a three-way analysis of variance for certification, revealed that there was no significant difference between teachers and principals regarding middle school certification. Specifically, when the attitudes of teachers and principals in all types of schools were analyzed, they showed neither a positive nor a negative attitude toward middle school certification. In addition, there was no significant difference in attitudes among the teachers and principals due to type of district. On the other hand, there was a significant difference in attitudes among teachers and principals when they were compared on the basis of the type of school in which they worked. As shown in Table 4, teachers and principals working in schools classified as middle schools indicated positive attitudes toward middle school certification, while those working in schools classified as elementary or as secondary showed ambivalent attitudes toward such certification.

Regarding middle school certification for principals, Table 5 reveals that 56.8 percent of teachers and principals in middle schools favored this type certification, while only 47.2 percent of those in secondary schools and 42.1 percent of those in elementary schools favored such certification.

With respect to middle school certification for counselors, the data in Table 6 show that teachers and principals in all types of schools favored such certification. Specifically, 65.2 percent of the teachers and principals in middle schools agreed that there should be middle school counselor certification, while 56.9 percent of those in elementary schools and 52.6 percent of those in secondary schools showed similar agreement.

Table 2

Number of Participants by Type of Position, Type of School
and Type of School District

	Teachers			Principals			Totals
	City	Exempted Village	Local Schools in County Systems	City	Exempted Village	Local Schools in County System	
Elementary	274	21	181	201	9	105	791
Middle	61	10	66	19	3	19	178
Secondary	77	13	53	41	3	33	220
TOTALS	142	44	300	261	15	157	1189

Table 3
Three-Way Analysis of Variance of Total Scores
on Middle School Certification

Sources of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-ratio
Position	70.3	1	70.3	2.695
District	50.2	2	25.1	0.961
Type	559.3	2	279.6	10.712*
Position x District	20.4	2	10.2	0.391
Position x Type	44.7	2	22.3	0.855
District x Type	250.6	4	62.7	2.400
3-way Interaction	104.8	4	26.2	1.003
Residual	30570.0	1171	26.1	

*Significant at $\alpha = .01$ with 2 and 1171 degrees of freedom.

Table 4

Means, Number of Participants, and Scheffe' Analysis
for the Three-way Analysis of Variance of
Total Scores for Certification

	Middle Schools	Secondary Schools	Elementary Schools
Mean	16.93	15.50	14.81
n	178	220	791
	Teachers	Principals	
Mean	15.52	14.80	
n	756	433	
	Village Schools	County Schools	City Schools
Mean	16.19	15.47	15.03
n	59	457	673

Note: Underlining indicates no statistical difference between or among the underlined means.

Note: Scores above 15 are considered indications of positive attitude. Scores below 15 are considered indications of negative attitude. Scores of 15 are considered indications of ambivalent attitude. The score of 15 was selected as the ambivalent score since the response "No Opinion" was weighted "3" and there were 5 items in this subscale.

Table 5

Number and Percentage of Responses to Item Categories,
and Chi Square Analysis of Responses Toward
Certification of Middle School Principals
by the Type of School

	Elementary School		Middle School		Secondary School	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Strongly Disagree	121	15.3	10	5.6	31	14.1
Disagree	271	34.3	49	27.5	69	31.4
No Opinion	66	8.3	18	10.1	16	7.3
Agree	250	31.6	66	37.1	83	37.7
Strongly Agree	83	10.5	35	19.7	21	9.5

Chi Square = 27.36 with 8 degrees of freedom and is significant at .01 level.

Table 6

Number and Percentage of Responses to Item Categories,
and Chi Square Analysis of Responses Toward
Certification of Middle School Counselors
by Type of School

	Elementary School		Middle School		Secondary School	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Strongly Disagree	94	11.9	6	3.4	25	11.4
Disagree	235	29.7	41	23.0	60	27.3
No Opinion	46	5.8	15	8.4	10	4.5
Agree	287	36.3	60	33.7	91	41.4
Strongly Agree	129	16.3	56	31.5	34	15.5

Chi Square = 36.33 with 8 degrees of freedom and is significant at .01 level.

Regarding middle school certification for teachers, Table 7 indicates that both teachers and principals in middle schools and those in secondary schools were in accord that there should be middle school teacher certification. That is, 58.4 percent of those in middle schools and 52.2 percent of those in secondary schools showed positive attitudes toward such certification, while only 43.3 percent of those in elementary schools showed similar attitudes.

Additional results from the study (Table 8), show that teachers and principals in all types of schools agreed that middle school certification should be granted through "add-on" procedures. That is, middle school validation would be added to an elementary or secondary certificate. Support for this "add-on" procedure was overwhelming as 66.3 percent of those in middle schools, 58.2 percent of those in secondary schools as well as 54.2 percent of those in elementary schools favored the "add-on" procedure.

DISCUSSION

The results of the study clearly show that middle school teachers and principals strongly support the need for middle school certification. This support is, however, not unanimous among all teachers and principals in grades six, seven and eight as those working in elementary and in secondary schools indicate ambivalent attitudes toward such certification.

In terms of specific types of certification, the study reveals three major findings. First, there is support by teachers and principals in all types of schools for middle school certification of counselors. Second, only middle school teachers and principals favor middle school certification for principals. Third, middle school certification for teachers is favored by both middle and secondary school teachers and principals.

Table 7

Number and Percentage of Responses to Item Categories,
and Chi Square Analysis of Responses Toward
Certification of Middle School Teachers
by Type of School

	Elementary School		Middle School		Secondary School	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Strongly Disagree	122	15.4	15	8.4	26	11.8
Disagree	266	33.6	48	27.0	61	27.7
No Opinion	45	5.7	11	6.2	18	8.2
Agree	268	33.9	67	37.6	83	37.7
Strongly Agree	90	11.4	37	20.8	32	14.5

Chi Square = 21.89 with 8 degrees of freedom and is significant at
.01 level.

Table 8

Number and Percentage of Responses to Item Categories,
and Chi Square Analysis of Responses Toward Middle
School Certification Through a Validation
Sticker Added to an Elementary or
Secondary Certificate by
Type of School

	Elementary School		Middle School		Secondary School	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Strongly Disagree	95	12.0	12	6.7	22	10.0
Disagree	207	26.2	29	16.3	45	20.5
No Opinion	60	7.6	19	10.7	25	11.4
Agree	325	41.1	78	43.8	87	39.1
Strongly Agree	104	13.1	40	22.5	42	19.1

Chi Square = 25.41 with 8 degrees of freedom and is significant at .01 level.

Further results reveal that there is strong agreement by teachers and principals in all types of schools, that the granting of middle school certification should be accomplished through a process whereby such certification would be added to an elementary or secondary certificate.

In summary, evidence from this study points out that whether one favors middle school certification appears to be directly related to the type of school in which one works. That is, teachers and principals working in elementary or secondary schools, irrespective of the grade levels contained, appear less apt to see a need for middle school certification than those working in middle schools. This finding, although not surprising, is significant as it may be one of the major reasons why teachers and principals working in elementary and secondary schools have been slow to recognize the need for middle school certification. Perhaps if those working in elementary and secondary schools were to develop a better understanding of the purposes, philosophy, curricula and instruction of middle schools they would see a greater need for middle school certification.

In light of this study, it seems only logical that additional research should be conducted to determine why teachers and principals in elementary and secondary schools (grades six through eight) do not favor certification of middle school teachers and principals.

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